

In conclusion, I may take this opportunity of mentioning that in the Park at Woburn there is a small herd of Wapiti-like deer from the Altai, which I believe to be referable to *C. eustephanus* of the Thian-Shan. Unfortunately, their antlers have been so damaged by the voyage, that they are valueless for purposes of comparison; but the general appearance of these animals leads one to think that they belong to the species in question. The big Deer of the Altai have been generally referred to the so-called *Cervus maral*, probably owing to the use of the term "Maral" by the natives of Central Asia. Mr. W. L. Sclater¹ has, however, already pointed out that the Altai deer is in all probability identical with the Thian-Shan stag. Accepting this identity, and also that *C. tuehdorfi* is specifically inseparable from *C. eustephanus*, the range of the latter species will extend from the Altai to Amurland, and will thus lead on towards the habitat of the Wapiti. These Altai deer appear to be distinctly different from *C. bedfordianus*.

Next year I hope to be able to give some further observations on the Altai deer at Woburn.

5. On the Habits of a Cuckoo in the Gilbert Islands.

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At a meeting of the Linnean Society of New South Wales, in September 1894, I exhibited a male and female of the Long-tailed Cuckoo, *Eudynamis taitensis*, which had been recently presented to the Trustees of the Australian Museum by the Hon. C. R. Swayne, H.B.M.'s Resident at the Gilbert and Ellice Groups. These birds had been obtained by Mr. Swayne on Big Makin Island or "Butari-tari" of the natives. A short note was also contributed relative to the distribution of this species, and to the tradition current among the natives of the Gilbert Group, that the female deposited her egg on a piece of palm-leaf placed on a cloud, and left it to be incubated by the sun².

During June of this year Mr. Swayne, who was in Sydney for a short time while on his way to London, informed me that he had seen this Cuckoo oust a Noddy Tern (*Anous stolidus*) from its nest and take possession of it. As the habits and food of these birds are so entirely different, and as I had never previously heard of so remarkable an instance of appropriation on the part of a Cuckoo, Mr. Swayne, prior to his departure, kindly sent me the following notes:—

¹ Cat. Mamm. Indian Mus. pt. ii. p. 184 (1891).

² See Proc. Linn. Soc. N. S. W. ser. 2, ix. p. 584.

"I promised to write you as to the 'Tekabare' (*Eudynamis taitensis*), of which I sent you specimens in 1894.

"This bird is found in both the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, and is, I believe, the only land-bird in the Gilberts, whereas in the Ellice Islands a large light slate-coloured Pigeon¹, known in Fiji as the 'Thireke,' is also found.

"During the latter part of my stay in the Gilberts, I was always on the look-out for information as to the nesting of the 'Tekabare,' but was unable to get any from the natives.

"In August last year I was at the island of Niu, in the Ellice Group, and while walking through the island along with the local trader we passed a clump of 'buka' trees, in which, as is common throughout the Ellice Islands, there were numbers of the Noddies (*Anous stolidus*) nesting. I noticed that in one tree the birds were much disturbed and apparently frightened. The trader explained that the birds were disturbed by a 'Hawk.' We remained some time watching, and I saw our friend the Cuckoo drive a Noddy out of the nest and take possession of it, while the old birds and apparent proprietors tried in vain to dislodge the intruder. The trees were high with long bare boles, impossible to climb, and if climbed it would be difficult to get at the nests, as the wood is soft and the branch on which the nest was built was insufficient to bear one's weight.

"I do not doubt that the Cuckoo was about to lay. As there are no 'buka' trees in the Gilberts, the Cuckoo doubtless lays in the Noddy's nest on the pandanus.

"I have often watched the Noddy in the Gilberts picking up grass and bits of coconut leaves and making its nest, which when finished very much resembles that belonging to a land-bird. It would be interesting to know whether the young Cuckoo is raised on a fish-diet.

"Although I offered rewards to the natives on many islands, I never was able to get an egg of the Cuckoo. In the Gilberts the people say they have never seen eggs or young, and, as I told you, they hold the tradition that the female takes a portion of the covering of the young palm-leaf and flying up with it deposits it on a cloud, lays her egg on it, where it is hatched by the sun.

"At the island of Funafuti, where the scientific expedition now is, the Cuckoo may be seen at the back of the town, and there are probably half a dozen birds in the atoll. Both the Noddy and the Man-of-War bird are kept as pets in the Ellice and Gilbert Islands, but I could never find that the Man-of-War bird was (as has been stated) used to carry messages between different islands. The old men always laughed at the idea."

¹ Probably *Globicera pacifica*.